

NHB/NMRTC Bremerton *Caduceus*

A Monthly Recap of info, insight & issues for May, 2022



Inclement Weather no damper to DECON Team

By Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer -- Inclement weather didn't put a damper on Naval Hospital Bremerton's Decontamination Team in successfully conducting and concluding a DECON certification course, May 5, 2022.

Under less-than-ideal rainy conditions, NHB's DECON team members were collectively and individually tested in being able to receive casualties during a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (and) explosives response (CBRNE) incident.

"In a real world scenario, a terrorist probably would not release a nerve or blood agent in the rain. However, that doesn't preclude an accidental hazardous material/toxic chemical release. Performing in the cold, wet conditions would be a challenge without having to also don full personal protective equipment and still perform the decontamination procedures for ambulatory or non-ambulatory patients," said Terry Lerma, NHB emergency preparedness manager.

The DECON team is the hospital's crucial first responders to any CBRNE emergency. The Sailors assigned to the team are asked – and tasked – to provide the first line of defense for an emergency system that everyone hopes is never needed but has to be ready to put in place if necessary.

"If these Sailors don't do their job, then no one at this hospital would be able to do their job either. There is no team more important," stated Mr. Tom Bocek, DECON, LLC training manager. "Handling any CBRNE contami-

nation takes precedence before anything else can get done during such an event.”

According to Lerma, the goal of the DECON training was to timely establish and maintain portable decontamination capability outside the hospital to keep contaminated patients from entering the facility, who would compromise the air quality within the building along with impact the safety of medical staff and patients inside.

“As some of my emergency manager counterparts say, “emergencies don’t make appointments,” and rightly so. Being able to respond and activate a mission capable and mission operational decontamination station swiftly and safely to protect the military treatment facility is critical in providing care to any victims, and to ensure we avoid spreading any contamination inside the hospital,” Lerma said.

For the approximately 55 Sailors assigned to the DECON team, the response exercise was the culmination of a three-day course with classroom didactic and hands-on training, with an emphasis on such basics as donning and using PPE and understanding decontamination procedures. The last day was devoted to equipment familiarization and processing of victims.

“In spite of the miserable weather conditions, the collective of new team members and the members who were doing their annual recertification performed extremely well, even impressing the DECON LLC instructors,” stated Lerma, adding that time-management is one of the critical benchmarks in judging how well the actual exercise played out.

After the word is passed that there is a potential CBRNE threat, the mission capable standard for a DECON team at a command like NHB to set up a DECON station and dress out at least four team members in PPE gear, is 15 minutes.

The mission operational time standard, getting a DECON station with tent and shower fully assembled, water heater attached and waste water bladder in place, and every team member fully dressed out, is 25 minutes.

“For a dual shelter MTF like us, there is an additional 10 minutes, 35 minutes total, to be fully mission operational with both tents fully operational and all team members fully dressed out,” Lerma said.

**Naval Hospital
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Navy internal publication**

Capt. Patrick Fitzpatrick, NC, Commanding Officer
Capt. Jeffrey Feinberg, MC (FS), Executive Officer
Command Master Chief James B. May



NHB's DECON team time?

"The first DECON station was mission capable at 6 minutes 52 seconds and mission operational at 8:22, with half the team members dressed out. The second tent was mission capable in 9:50, and mission operational at 15:52. That 15:52 time is with both tents fully operational and every single team member fully dressed out," explained Lerma.

The DECON team's mission is relatively straight forward – as soon as any patient shows up, the set-up scene goes from 'cold' to 'warm' (uncontaminated to contaminated) and the team's duty is to cleanse the patient.

Bocek affirms that the entire technical DECON process requires focus and attention at every step along the way. Although timing is essential, doing everything correctly is imperative.

"It's not about how fast but about how efficient, effective and safely they handle all the steps," Bocek said.

"In those cold wet conditions, the times were phenomenal, and no one slipped, tripped or fell," Lerma noted. "No one suffered any cold/hypothermia injuries. The DECON team members moved with a purpose and a focus." That focus might be needed when least expected, especially when taken in the context that there is a historical precedence.

Bocek shared that there's been a number of incidents effecting U.S. military installations over the last dozen years, including one hitting close to home at NHB's branch health clinic on Naval Station Everett in 2010. A hazardous substance solvent used in a variety of industrial uses from paints to brake fluids sent a delivery driver and three firemen to be decontaminated at Branch Health Clinic Everett Clinic before being transferred on to Providence hospital in Everett.

In 2011, the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster, caused by an undersea earthquake and associated tsunami, had aircrew personnel getting 'decontaminated from USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) after potentially flying through invisible radioactive plumes.

Just five years earlier in 2017, an explosion and fire at an Eglin Air Force Base (Florida) laboratory released the toxic chemical methylene chloride which triggered 53 people needing decontamination attention.



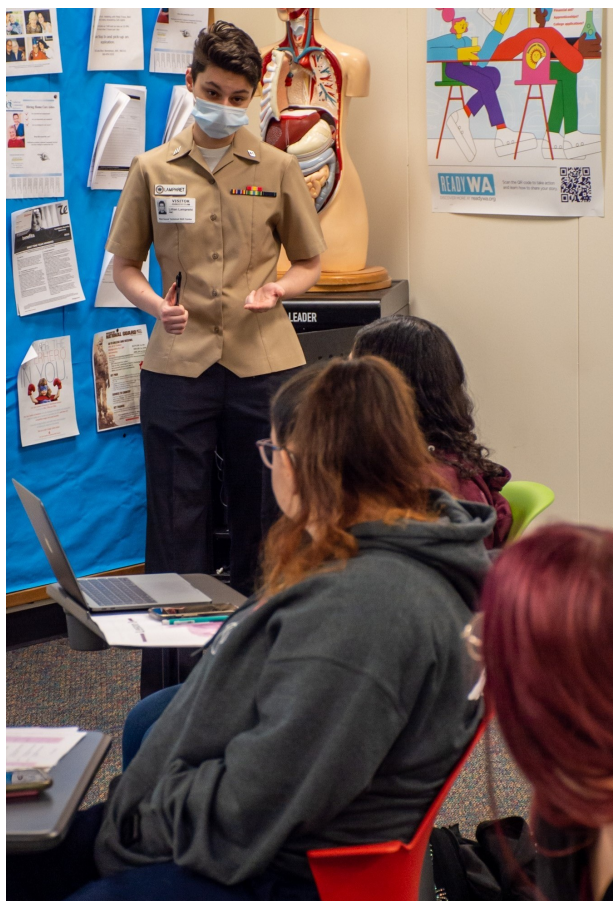
NHB/NMRTC Bremerton Webpage:
<https://bremerton.tricare.mil/>

NHB/NMRTC Bremerton Official Facebook site:
<https://www.facebook.com/navalhospitalbremerton>

NHB on Defense Video Info Distro Service:
<https://www.dvidshub.net/tags/news/nmrtc-bremerton>

NHB Command Ombudsman:
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STEM Support for Local Students

Hospitalman Lillian Lampreht, assigned to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Bremerton, speaks with students at West Sound Technical Skills Center's Professional Medical Careers class about day-to-day life in the Navy as a hospital corpsman. The visit was part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program at the command, tailored to bring real-world experience in the medical field to students considering a medical or military. (All Official U.S. Navy photos by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Kyle Steckler/NMRTC Bremerton Public Affairs)



Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jose Perez, an x-ray technician assigned to NMRTC Bremerton, speaks with students at West Sound Technical Skills Center's Professional Medical Careers class about the command's radiology program and department. The visit was part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program at the command, tailored to bring real-world experience in the medical field to students considering a medical or military career.



Hospital corpsmen assigned to NMRTC Bremerton speak with students at West Sound Technical Skills Center's Professional Medical Careers class as part of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program at the command, which is tailored to bring real-world experience in the medical field to students considering a medical or military. The Sailors covered broad topics such as military service and the overall hospital corpsman rating as well as specific specialties including advanced x-ray technician and surgical technologist.

I Am Navy Medicine – Lt. James E. Kirlin, Navy Nurse Corps Officer

By Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer -- Watching the 9/11 terrorist attack unfold over 20 years ago brought a Casper, Wyoming native from the Rockies to Navy Nurse Corps ranks.



Lt. James Kirlin, Natrona County High School graduate class of 2002, has gone from Naval Aviation to Navy Medicine in a career path defined by operations undertaken on a nuclear aircraft carrier flight deck to operations performed at Naval Hospital Bremerton's Urgent Care Clinic.

His 20-year Navy career has taken him from deploying on USS George Washington (CVN 73) in support of the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom in the Persian Gulf to providing medical assistance and humanitarian aid while onboard hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) to Latin America and Caribbean nations.

Yet perhaps no assignment exemplifies Kirlin's commitment to helping those in need than his work spanning the winter of 2021-2022. He deployed to two U.S. civilian hospitals, working in conjunction with U.S. Northern Command and the Federal Emergency Management Agency response to help ease the burden of COVID-19.

"From December to February I was at San Juan Regional Medical Center in Farmington, New Mexico. For March of this year I was at the University of Utah Level-1 Trauma Center in Salt Lake City. For both of these deployments, the mission was geared more towards helping stressed and under-staffed healthcare systems rather than focusing solely on COVID. During both of these missions, our team [physicians, nurses, hospital corpsmen with respiratory technician specialty and admin support] seamlessly integrated alongside our civilian counterparts and functioned as full-scope staff members," said Kirlin.

With his background as the division officer of NHB's UCC, Kirlin worked in the emergency room at San Juan Regional Medical Center helped on their under-staffed trauma team. In Utah he assisted with inpatient care on a trauma unit.

"Both deployments provided tremendous stress relief for the staff at these facilities, allowing for both hospitals to open additional ER and inpatient beds. For myself, these deployments provided invaluable clinical sustainment opportunity. The level of acuity that I was working with was much higher than I would typically see at a military treatment facility," Kirlin said.

As with any deployment away from home, there were hurdles to clear.

"The most challenging aspect was the unpredictability for both and having to suddenly be away from family at a moment's notice. For both deployments I had only a four or five day notice, which was particularly difficult for my wife and children with me suddenly being gone over the holidays. As much as it was me who deployed to help our nation in a time of need, my family made as big of, if not more of a sacrifice," stated Kirlin, adding there were additional stressors including providing close monitoring and acute care to patients on a daily basis and being exposed to high levels of trauma and suffering, with unfortunate outcomes in many instances. Yet as with most deployments, along with adversity were encouraging moments.

"The most gratifying experience of these deployments was when patients became aware that we were U.S. Navy. Being able to experience their heartfelt, sincere gratitude for our role in their very individual healthcare experiences gave me a strong sense of pride. It was also extremely gratifying to work within the Navajo community, both with Navajo patients and alongside Navajo healthcare workers. High levels of healthcare disparity persist in the Navajo Nation community, and for the U.S. Navy to help this community in a time of high need was a very personally rewarding experience," related Kirlin.

In 2020 and 2021 there were approximately 50 staff members assigned to NHB who answered the call when and where needed during the pandemic. A similar refrain upon returning from all was the distinctive professional as well as personal fulfillment of being able to care for fellow countrymen and women.

“I have been in the Navy for 20 years, with multiple deployments and overseas assignments. Being able to directly help our own country in a direct way was special. These missions really spoke to the strength of Navy Medicine and our ability to respond, no matter the mission. It also provided an opportunity for these medical response teams to act as ambassadors for the Navy within our own country, allowing civilians all over to see Navy Medicine in action and gain insight into what it is we do,” stated Kirlin, who joined the Navy immediately after high school.

Kirlin began as an undesignated airman, working with fixed wing and rotor aircraft, advancing up the enlisted ranks to petty officer first class. In 2010, with the U.S. and coalition allies battling at two fronts that he decided to change his career path.

“I was looking for a career that was aimed at helping people. During the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, there were very high casualties, including a very close friend and roommate of mine who was killed by a Taliban sniper in 2010 in Helmand Province [Afghanistan]. I gradually felt that my calling was to help the military in a medical capacity,” recalled Kirlin, who was accepted to Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program in 2012, began nursing school at Old Dominion University in 2013, graduated Suma Cum Laude in 2016, and commissioned in the Navy Nurse Corps.



His first duty station in Navy Medicine was working in cardiac critical care at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Virginia, where he earned his Progressive Care Certified Nurse (PCCN) certification. He also deployed onboard the USNS Comfort during that time to Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Panama and Honduras before transferring to his current assignment at NHB.

“It has been an extremely rewarding experience to serve as a nurse while wearing the U.S. Navy uniform. Some of the most rewarding experiences involved representing America and the U.S. Navy while providing humanitarian aid to South America,” said Kirlin.

Whether haze gray underway thousands of nautical miles from home or plying nursing skill in the American southwest, putting service before self has been a continual theme for Kirlin during his two decades.



“The Navy is truly what defines a high reliability organization. For all of our challenges, when the call to deploy is made, Navy Medicine rises to the occasion and gets the job done, every time. To be a part of such a high-functioning team that can respond to any crisis, anywhere in the world, at a moment’s notice,

gives me a sense of pride and purpose that would be hard to find in any other occupation,” explained Kirlin.

“Our chief mission in Navy Medicine is to be ready to answer the call when our nation needs our service on or in support of the battlefield,” continued Kirlin. “As a Nurse Corps officer, I have been able to hone my leadership skills to help lead these future medical missions, and I have been able to improve my clinical skills by supporting military treatment facilities, supporting humanitarian aid in times of crisis, and by supporting civilian hospitals during our nation’s struggle with COVID-19.”



Here's the scoop...it's National Nurses Week, May 6-12, 2022!

Navy Nurse Corps officers, civil service and contractor nurses at Naval Hospital Bremerton provided an ice cream social as part of their heartfelt thanks to all nurses assigned to the command – as well as those they work with and for – in conjunction with the annual celebration, culminating with the Nurse Corps 114th birthday on May 13, a day after the birthday of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), the founder of modern nursing (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer).





Naval Hospital Bremerton Pharmacy Department was presented with the Five-Star Customer Service Recognition Program award for their collective accountability and ownership; empathy and compassion; positive and passionate attitude; and responsiveness. The 'Pharm Phamily' was noted for their dedication to customer service, as evident by the implementation of new and innovative ways to provide the best customer service to their patients, such as with the new Q-Anywhere system, which allows patients to activate new or renewed prescriptions from their phone, which means no longer having to wait in the Main Out-Patient Pharmacy lobby. The Pharmacy staff have also been active in enrolling patients in the new ScriptCenter stations which provide an easy and alternative method to pick up medications, located at NHB's Parking Garage Level A, at Naval Base Kitsap Bangor Exchange and Naval Station Everett's Food Court. The Pharmacy team has also shifted the way they operate to help seamlessly integrate these new – and time saving - initiatives into the support provided to all eligible beneficiaries. Average wait times are now lower, and customer satisfaction rate is above 90 percent (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer)



A visual pause for the safety cause...*In conjunction with the Navy's 'Keep What You've Earned' campaign to encourage responsible drinking and remind Sailors that all their hard work, discipline and dedication can be negated if a lousy choice is made to drink and drive, Sailors assigned to NMRTC Bremerton take a moment to visually appeal to their co-workers, colleagues and peers on responsible behavior with adult beverages, especially drinking and driving. Compiled statistics show that four percent of off-duty mishaps involved alcohol, 22 percent of fatalities due to off-duty mishaps involved alcohol. Impaired driving kills one person in the U.S. every 48 minutes. One in three crash deaths involved drunk driving. There were 634 traffic deaths recorded on Washington State highways in 2021. Do the math. That means – on average – 211 people were killed by a drunk driver. Booze was also involved in 37 percent of all fatal bicycle crashes. As NMRTC Bremerton Sailors note...don't let alcohol get the best of you. Ever (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer).*



Bravo Zulu earned...*Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Aaron Foxworth assigned to Clinical Support Services Radiology Department (Left) and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Tessa Hazard with the command's career counselor office are congratulated by Capt. Patrick Fitzpatrick, commanding officer and Command Master Chief James B. May for being selected Junior Sailor and Sailor of the Quarter, respectively (Official Navy photos by PAO).*

When others are Weak, They are Strong – Nurse Corps at 114

By Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer – Over the past two years, almost half of Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command Bremerton staff who deployed on COVID Medical Response Teams were from one distinctive group; Navy Nurse Corps.



“When others are weak, they are strong,” stated Lt. Cmdr. John Tarr, Navy Chaplain Corps, in offering a blessing of hands during NMRTC Bremerton’s recognition of the Navy Nurse Corps 114th birthday, May 13, 2022.

According to compiled statistics by Navy Medicine, Nurse Corps officers have responded to mission requirements and operational deployments in 2020 and 2021 sending nearly 50 Nurse Corps personnel on a number of aircraft carriers, fleet surgical teams and hospital ship(s) USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) and USNS Mercy (T-AH 19). There have also been approximately 140 Nurse Corps officers attached to 1st, 2nd and 3rd Marine Corps medical battalions, not including those tabbed – many at the last minute – to respond to the pandemic and help render aid to those in need.

“In the past two years alone, over 900 active and reserve Navy Nurses, approximately 24 percent of our total force, deployed in support of COVID operations and Operation Allies Welcome,” wrote Rear Adm. Cynthia Kuehner, Navy Nurse Corps director, who counts Naval Hospital Bremerton amongst her prior duty stations.

There are currently approximately 2,700 active duty and 1,050 reservist Navy Nurse Corps officer in 17 different specialties assigned throughout the Navy and Marine Corps, including approximately 65 Nurse Corps officers and 70 civilian nurses at NHB.

The Navy Nurse Corps birthday was a culmination of an entire week of celebration with National Nurses Week, May 6-12, honoring all active duty, civilian and contractor nurses at NHB/NMRTC Bremerton. The entire seven-day span is especially symbolic with the birthday of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), considered the founder of modern nursing, on May 12, and followed a day later by the Navy Nurse Corps birthday.

The entire week featured daily events, including an ice cream and popcorn social, continental breakfast offerings, tailored virtual training seminars and numerous Blessing of the Hands services to accommodate all shifts of the staff nurses.

“Thanks to all those who put together all the little things to recognize Navy Nurse Corps and nurses,” said Cmdr. Terri Jandron, assistant chief nursing officer.



Along with the heartfelt handwritten letter from Kuehner, correspondence from all other Navy Medicine corps chiefs were also read aloud, including from Rear Adm. Bruce Gillingham, Navy surgeon general and chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery who thanked the Nurse Corps for their dedication, service and sacrifice.

“It is no surprise that the World Health Organization declared 2020 and 2021 International Year of the nurse. This honor recognizes the powerful impact, sacrifice and steadfast devotion of nurses globally in the world’s fight against the deadly Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic. Navy nurses have been a vital part of this effort,” Gillingham shared.

“For the 20th year in a row, nursing was named the most trusted profession in the annual Gallup Honesty and Ethics poll. Military officers were also in the top five. A double win, in my book, for Navy Nurses and I could not be more proud,” added Gillingham.

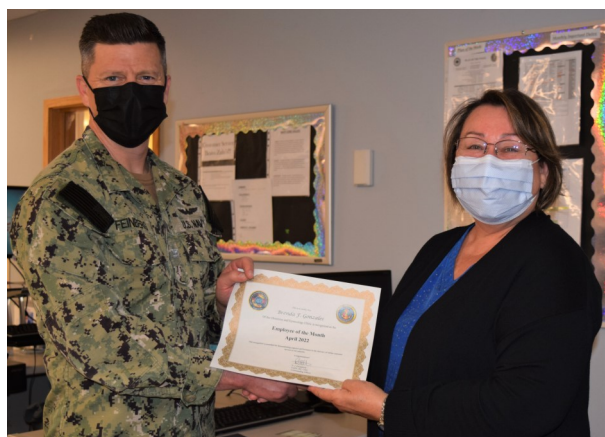
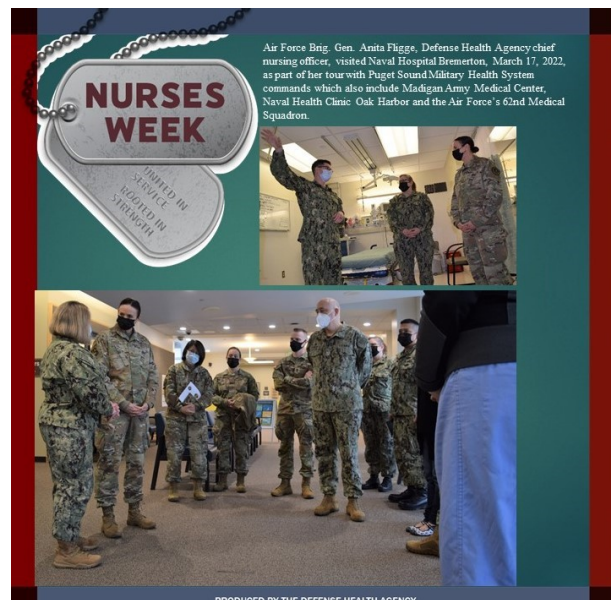
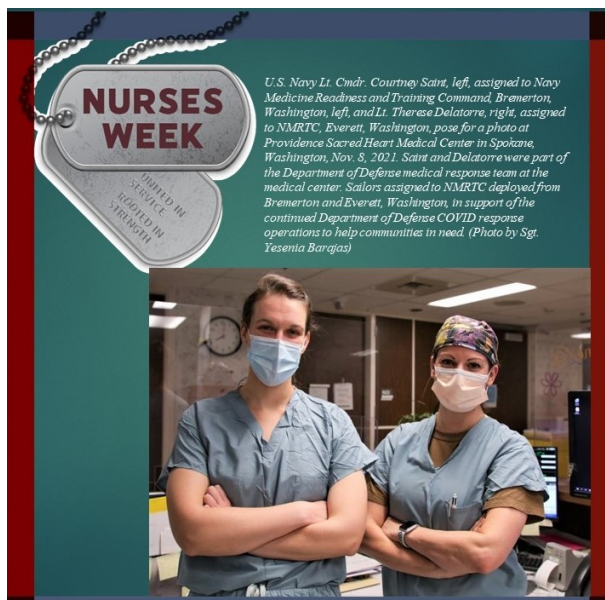
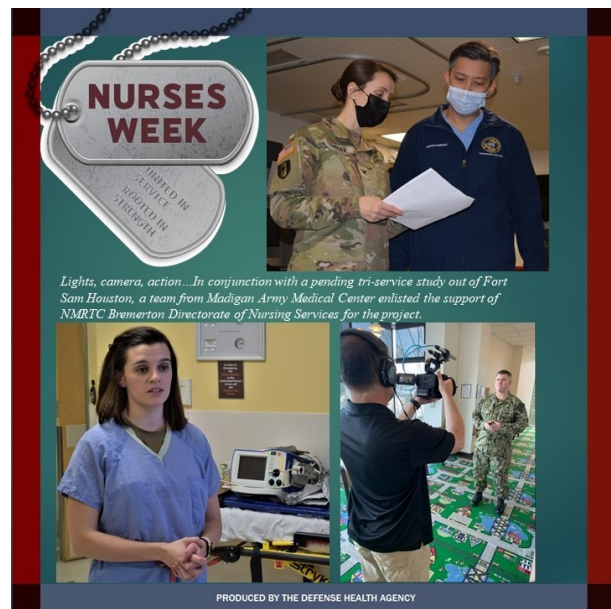
After all letters were read, the most experienced and youngest Nurse Corps officers participated in the traditional cake-cutting portion of the ceremony. Capt. Patrick Fitzpatrick, NHB director and NMRTC Bremerton commanding officer, who initially enlisted in the Navy Reserves as a Seabee from Missoula, Montana, in 1992, was joined by Lt. j.g. Samantha Dahl, a Florida native approaching four years of duty, recently assigned to NMRTC Bremerton from Naval Medical Center San Diego.

“I couldn’t think of a better job than nursing in the military. I always wanted to help others,” explained Dahl, a University of Central Florida graduate who credits one of her professors with prior Navy Nurse Corps experience with kindling her interest to get where she is today.

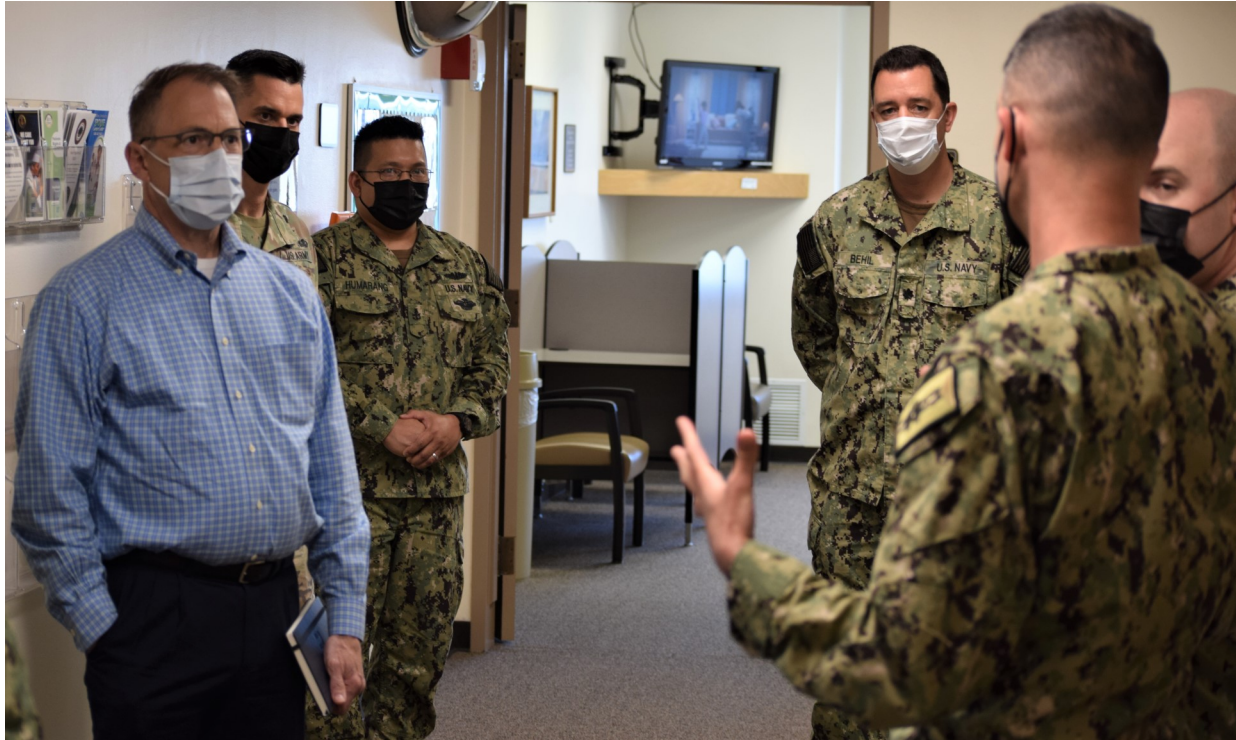
Nurse Corps officers like Dahl follow in the footsteps of Fitzpatrick, handling a host of specialties as part of their overall duties, including family nurse practitioner, executive medicine, nurse anesthetist, clinical nurse, perioperative nursing, maternal child, ambulatory, medical surgical, critical care, and pediatric nursing.

As well as continue to answer the call for responding to mission requirements and operational deployments.





Brenda F. Gonzales, of Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinic was recognized as the **Employee of the Month** "demonstrating superior performance in the delivery of stellar customer service to our patients." Congratulations!



Candid dialogue... Dr. Brian Lein, MD, assistant director for Healthcare Administration at the Defense Health Agency visited Naval Hospital Bremerton May 18, 2020. Lein was welcomed by NHB command leadership along with Col. Jonathan Taylor, Puget Sound MHS Market director and Madigan Army Medical Center commander.

Lein was met and greeted by NHB staff at several locales including Mental Health department and the Main Operating Room before convening with top hospital officials for a round table meeting to discuss such topics as current hiring practices, transition of administration and management to DHA and joint service cooperation.

"We can never lose the focus of what we're here for. We're here because of the uniform that you're wearing. The president of the United States can call you up today and say 'I need you to go someplace tonight.' And if you're not ready then our Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen and Marines will not make it home. That's your sole responsibility, because a local civilian hospital will never do that. They never have the responsibility to deploy. They never have the responsibility to go far forward. Healthcare administration is my job, but really the only reason that we exist as a military healthcare system is not the healthcare delivery portion, it's the readiness portion. It's the readiness of the Sailors and Marines you support here and readiness of every Sailor, physician and nurse who is going to get called upon by the Navy surgeon general who says 'I need you tonight to go someplace.' Because no one does it and we can't ever say that's not our priority," stated Lein, charged with overseeing the Military Health System transition of administration and management from all military hospitals and clinics from the branch services – Army, Air Force and Navy – to DHA (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer).

I Am Navy Medicine, Senior Sailor of the Quarter, Cambodian Immigrant – HM1 Danny Varath

By Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer -- After a childhood spent in post war-torn Cambodia, making the decision to join the military in his adopted nation was not met with overwhelming acceptance by family.

Yet for Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Danny Varath, his career choice has resulted in gradual approval at home, professional development in his preferred field, and personal appreciation for being part of the U.S. Navy.

“I have always been interested in the military since I was a little kid in Cambodia. Growing up, military and political violent was part of life. It was normal to hear gun fire and grenades going off,” said Varath, born in Phnom Penh before relocating to the U.S. in 1999, living in Philadelphia, Pa., and graduating from Samuel Fels High School in 2006.

It was at Samuel Fels that he initially became aware of the Navy.

“My interest started when two guys who graduated that year came in wearing their service white uniform with a recruiter. That is when I found out about all the opportunity the Navy has to offer. I saw that as a way out of poverty, gang and drug infested city. The Navy slogan back then was ‘Accelerate your life.’ That was what I needed,” Varath said.

After high school, Varath got accepted into the Nursing Program at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia where his sister achieved her PhD. However, he decided to put college on hold and instead opted to seek employment.

“The 2006 to 2009 housing crisis was a tough time for the economy and job market. I was unemployed half of the



time. I was very dissatisfied with the direction that my life was going. I finally decided to start a new journey and join the military,” related Varath, choosing to become a hospital corpsmen based upon his passion to be in the medical field.

Still, the hardest part of his decision was departing from his family into a military career which brought back echoes of war from being raised in the aftermath of the horrors from a protracted civil war and the genocidal terror of the Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge years.

“It wasn’t easy for my parents to accept my decision. They both lost siblings in the military and they do not want to go through that again. In a war-torn nation, being in the military is a death sentence. Growing up, four of my cousins didn’t have their parents. I understand how they feel. It was one of the hardest decision I had to make. My mom broke down and cried on the day I shipped out to the boot camp,” explained Varath.

Fast forward from that day a dozen years ago. Varath is far from the killing fields. He’s an x-ray technician and leading petty officer of Naval Hospital Bremerton’s Radiology department after previous assignment at Naval Health Clinic Cherry Point, USS George Washington (CVN 73), and USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75).

His work – and ability – as an x-ray tech has not gone unnoticed. Varath was recently recognized as the command’s Senior Sailor of the Quarter.

“I was very surprised. I didn’t think I had what it take to be SSOQ,” shared Varath. “The competition was tough and it has always been that way. Being selected means that I represent my department, my chain of command, all the staff and junior sailors’ accomplishment well. No one can make it on their own in the Navy. I learned that early on.”

Varath and his Radiology Department team provide crucial services in supporting the Navy surgeon general priorities of operational readiness and the core mission of ensuring force medical readiness with a ready medical force.

“We provide clinical supports for the providers to help them diagnose patients with imaging. With proper diagnoses, we can reduce medical error, provide better treatment plan, and reduce recovery time,” said Varath.

NHB’s Radiology Department conducted approximately 23,000 total diagnostic exams during the ongoing pandemic in 2021, along with 1,300 diagnostic CT exams, over 100 cone beam CT scans, nearly 1,650 mammograms, over 1,550 MRIs, approximately 2,500 ultrasounds and more than 180 nuclear medicine bone density scans. Additionally, the branch health clinics located on Naval Base Kitsap Bangor, Naval Station Everett and Puget Sound Naval Shipyard each performed hundreds of x-ray requests, along with NHB Radiology also assisting x-ray needs for 92d Medical Group, Fairchild Air Force Base.

“During the whole pandemic, we stayed open every day to assist our Urgent Care team and clinics to help diagnose patient with positive COVID and disease progression,” noted Varath.

Varath’s nomination as Senior Sailor of the Quarter correlates with the annual Department of Defense observation of May as Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This year’s theme, “Advancing Leaders through Collaboration” recognizes the collective benefits resulting from a spirit of community, cooperation and cultural engagement and thoroughly resonates with Varath.

“Diversity and inclusion are the main reason I stay in the Navy. From my experience in the civilian work force the Navy is very fair for promotion and pay opportunities. If you put forth your best effort and work hard every day, someone will notice it. You will get recognized,” Varath said, adding that the best part(s) of his Navy career have been meeting new people, building new friendships, and being able to travel.

When asked to sum up his experience being part of Navy Medicine Varath replied, “I wish I could had joined sooner. I would do it over and over again. I will have stories to tell my grandkids someday.”



In conjunction with recognizing Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the command Diversity Committee held an creative poster board contest to highlight an Asian country, culture or Pacific island of the staff member's choice. Recognized for their contributions were (from left to right, flanked by Chief Hospital Corpsman Elizabeth Barraza of the Diversity Committee and Command Master Chief James B. May) were Hospital Corpsman Kristen Robinson presenting the Solomon Islands, HN Alessandra Vera highlighting Fiji and HN Rachelle Lawson with Japan. Also taking part at Navy Medicine Readiness Training Unit Everett were Hospital Corpsman Michael Marinas and HN Robert Ovenshire. The original crafted posters are displayed on the quarterdeck through the end of the month (official Navy photos).

Fallen and Unforgotten 5K—Miles in Remembrance



In honor of the significance of Memorial Day, Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command Bremerton held a “Fallen and Unforgotten 5K,” to memorialize those lost, every step along the way, May 26, 2022.

Participants from NMRTC Bremerton as well as USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) ran, walked and rucked along the winding course organized by NMRTC Bremerton’s 124th Hospital Corps Ball Committee.

“It important for us to know Memorial Day weekend is not just about time off. It’s to remember all those who didn’t make it home,” shared Chief Hospital Corpsman Danny Garcia, Navy Medicine Readiness

Training Unit Bangor leading chief petty officer and command fitness leader coordinator.



Although hospital corpsmen weren’t the only ones legging out the 3.1 mile distance, they were the most, along with master-at-arms and Dental Corps staff represented.

The Hospital Corps is also the only enlisted corps in the military, as well as the most decorated group of enlisted men and women. Since being established on June 17, 1898, corpsmen have been recognized with 22 Medals of Honor, 178 Navy Crosses, 31 Distinguished Service Medals, and 946 Silver Stars.

There are 20 ships named in their honor. One of the branch health clinics for the NMRTC Bremerton honors one of those Medal of Honor recipients by being named The David R. Ray Health Center, Naval Station Everett.

The recognition under fire has come at a heavy cost with the Hospital Corps ranks suffering since their inception.

NMRTC Bremerton remembers. At the command’s Hospital Corps Heroes Wall of Honor unveiled in 2015, the engraved names of 57 corpsmen lost during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom added another. A solemn ceremony was held to include Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Maxton Soviak, killed during a suicide bombing August 26, 2021, at the Abbey Gates of Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Soviak and the other 57, along with every other soldier, sailor, airmen and Marine who has fallen, but unforgotten were remembered today.

Every Step of the way.





Armed Forces Day: Honors those currently serving in the Armed Forces.
Memorial Day: Honors those who died in service to the nation.
Veterans Day: Honors those living who wore the cloth of the nation serving their country.



Homeport PT Clinic Opens at NHB

By Douglas H Stutz, NHB/NMRTC Bremerton public affairs officer -- There's a new tweak and twist being offered for active duty, retirees and family members enrolled at Naval Hospital Bremerton Family Medicine and Pediatric clinics.



There is now Homeport Physical Therapy available to provide timely support for all patients with acute care needs.

“We’re providing same day access. If a patient comes in for an appointment with their primary care manager and they have a back issue which has been aggravated or chronic pain which has flared up, they can be sent directly here to be seen,” said Dr. Hannah Leon, physical therapist and doctor of physical therapy.

“What we’ve done is eliminate the need for a referral by their provider for physical therapy with a Family Medicine or Pediatric patient,” added Lt. Heather Walmer, Family Medicine interim department head and clinic manager. “We hope to see as many patients in as possible. Being able to provide same day service is really beneficial.”

Physical Therapists like Leon specialize in helping patients – some as young as two months – by specific techniques on how to reduce or eliminate pain, aid the healing of

an acute injury, delay or even avoid surgery completely, prepare for a surgical procedure and recovery, restore mobility, balance, or normal gait, prevent re-injury, and provide education on preventing future injuries. Leon attests that the educational portion of any treatment is just as important as the hands-on support.

“We can help a lot for someone in pain. There’s no surgery and no medications. It’s low risk, fun, and also educational, with a little homework, too,” Leon said.

The most common types of ailments routinely seen at NHB’s Physical Therapy Department are low back pain, knee pain, and post-surgical conditions. The same holds true in Homeport Physical Therapy.

In her capacity, Leon can diagnose and treat individuals of all ages who have medical problems or other health-related conditions that limit their abilities to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. This may include diagnosis and management of movement dysfunction as well as enhancement of physical and functional abilities. Physical therapists can also help restore, maintain, and promote optimum physical function, as well as improved wellness, fitness, and quality of life as it relates to each patient’s needs, movement and health.

“Our Family Medicine patients have all been so glad at being seen the same day they come in for an appointment with their provider. It can take a few days at times to get another referral. But this way we get them in here and get treatment going to immediately help them,” stated Leon.

Whether helping mend a twisted ankle or tweaked back, assisting an injured patient to recover after a fall, and even dealing with vertigo – officially known as vestibular rehabilitation therapy - the Homeport Physical Therapy offers timely patient-centered care.

“There is no walk-in service provided,” clarified Walmer. “Everyone treated in Home Port Physical Therapy will be sent from their Family Medicine or Pediatric provider.”